

*R. L. No 15-12*  
LECTURES

ON

AMERICAN SLAVERY.

BY FREDERICK DOUGLASS. 1817-1895

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OBERLIN COLLEGE

BY THE HEIRS OF

WILLIAM GOODELL.

# LECTURE NO. 1.

*Delivered on Sunday Evening, December 1, 1850.*

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I come before you this evening to deliver the first lecture of a course which I purpose to give in this city, during the present winter, on the subject of American Slavery.

I make this announcement with no feelings of self-sufficiency. If I do not mistake my own emotions, they are such as result from a profound sense of my incompetency to do justice to the task which I have just announced, and have now entered upon.

If any, then, demand of me why I speak, I plead as my apology, the fact that abler and more eloquent men have failed to speak, or what, perhaps, is more true, and therefore more strong, such men have spoken only on the wrong side of the question, and have thus thrown their influence against the cause of liberty, humanity and benevolence.

There are times in the experience of almost every community, when even the humblest member thereof may properly presume to teach—when the wise and great ones, the appointed leaders of the people, exert their powers of mind to complicate, mystify, entangle and obscure the simple truth—when they exert the noblest gifts which heaven has vouchsafed to man to mislead the popular mind, and to corrupt the public heart—*then* the humblest may stand forth and be excused for opposing even his weakness to the torrent of evil.

That such a state of things exists in this community, I have abundant evidence. I learn it from the Rochester press, from the Rochester pulpit, and in my intercourse with the people of Rochester. Not a day passes over me that I do not meet with apparently good men, who utter sentiments in respect to this subject which would do discredit to savages. They speak of the enslavement of their fellow-men with an indifference and coldness which might be looked for only in men hardened by the most atrocious and villanous crimes.

The fact is, we are in the midst of a great struggle.—The public mind is widely and deeply agitated; and bubbling up from its perturbed waters, are many and great impurities, whose poisonous miasma demands a constant antidote.

Whether the contemplated lectures will in any degree contribute towards answering this demand, time will determine.

Of one thing, however, I can assure my hearers—that I come up to this work at the call of duty, and with an honest desire to promote the happiness and well-being of every member of this community, as well as to advance the emancipation of every slave.

The audience will pardon me if I say one word more by way of introduction. It is my purpose to give this subject a calm, candid and faithful discussion. I shall not aim to shock nor to startle my hearers; but to convince their judgment and to secure their sympathies for the enslaved. I shall aim to be as stringent as truth, and as severe as justice; and if at any time I shall fail of this, and do injustice in any respect, I shall be most happy to be set right by any gentleman who shall hear me, subject, of course, to order and decorum. I shall deal, dur-

ing these lectures, alike with individuals and institutions—men shall no more escape me than things. I shall have occasion, at times, to be even personal, and to rebuke sin in high places. I shall not hesitate to arraign either priests or politicians, church or state, and to measure all by the standard of justice, and in the light of truth. I shall not forget to deal with the unrighteous spirit of *caste* which prevails in this community; and I shall give particular attention to the recently enacted fugitive slave bill. I shall keep my eye upon the Congress which is to commence to-morrow, and fully inform myself as to its proceedings. In a word, the whole subject of slavery, in all its bearings, shall have a full and impartial discussion.

A very slight acquaintance with the history of American slavery is sufficient to show that it is an evil of which it will be difficult to rid this country. It is not the creature of a moment, which to day is, and to-morrow is not; it is not a pigmy, which a slight blow may demolish; it is no youthful upstart, whose impertinent pratings may be silenced by a dignified contempt. No: it is an evil of gigantic proportions, and of long standing.

Its origin in this country dates back to the landing of the pilgrims on Plymouth rock—It was here more than two centuries ago. The first spot poisoned by its leprous presence, was a small plantation in Virginia. The slaves, at that time, numbered only twenty. They have now increased to the frightful number of three millions; and from that narrow plantation, they are now spread over by far the largest half of the American Union. Indeed, slavery forms an important part of the entire history of the American people. Its presence may be seen in all American affairs. It has become interwoven with all American institutions, and has anchored itself in the very

soil of the American Constitution. It has thrown its paralysing arm over freedom of speech, and the liberty of the press; and has created for itself morals and manners favorable to its own continuance. It has seduced the church, corrupted the pulpit, and brought the powers of both into degrading bondage; and now, in the pride of its power, it even threatens to bring down that grand political edifice, the American Union, unless every member of this republic shall so far disregard his conscience and his God as to yield to its infernal behests.

*That* must be a powerful influence which can truly be said to govern a nation; and that slavery governs the American people, is indisputably true. If there were any doubt on this point, a few plain questions (it seems to me) could not fail to remove it. *What* power has given this nation its Presidents for more than fifty years? *Slavery*. What power is that to which the present aspirants to presidential honors are bowing? *Slavery*. We may call it "Union," "Constitution," "Harmony," or "American Institutions," that to which such men as Cass, Dickenson, Webster, Clay and other distinguished men of this country, are devoting their energies, is nothing more nor less than American slavery. It is for this that they are writing letters, making speeches, and promoting the holding of great mass meetings, professedly in favor of "*the Union*." These men know the service most pleasing to their master, and that which is most likely to be richly rewarded. Men may "serve God for nought," as did Job; but he who serves the devil has an eye to his reward. "Patriotism," "obedience to the law," "prosperity to the country," have come to mean, in the mouths of these distinguished statesmen, a mean and servile acquiescence in the most flagitious and profligate

legislation in favor of slavery. I might enlarge here on this picture of the slave power, and tell of its influence upon the press in the free States, and upon the condition and rights of the free colored people of the North; but I forbear for the present. Enough has been said, I trust, to convince all that the abolition of this evil will require time, energy, zeal, perseverance and patience; that it will require fidelity, a martyr-like spirit of self-sacrifice, and a firm reliance on HIM who has declared Himself to be *the God of the oppressed*." Having said thus much upon the power and prevalence of slavery, allow me to speak of the nature of slavery itself; and here I can speak, in part, from experience—I can speak with the authority of positive knowledge.

More than twenty years of my life were consumed in a state of slavery. My childhood was environed by the baneful peculiarities of the slave system. I grew up to manhood in the presence of this hydra-headed monster—not as a master—not as an idle spectator—not as the guest of the slaveholder; but as A SLAVE, eating the bread and drinking the cup of slavery with the most degraded of my brother bondmen, and sharing with them all the painful conditions of their wretched lot. In consideration of these facts, I feel that I have a right to speak, and to speak *strongly*. Yet, my friends, I feel bound to speak truly.

Goaded as have been the cruelties to which I have been subjected—bitter as have been the trials through which I have passed—exasperating as have been (*and still are*) the indignities offered to my manhood, I find in them no excuse for the slightest departure from truth in dealing with any branch of this subject.

First of all, I will state, as well as I can, the legal and social relation of master and slave. A master is one (to speak in the vocabulary of the Southern States) who claims and exercises a right of property in the person of a fellow man. This he does with the force of the law and the sanction of Southern religion. The law gives the master absolute power over the slave. He may work him, flog him, hire him out, sell him, and in certain contingencies, *kill* him, with perfect impunity. The slave is a human being, divested of all rights—reduced to the level of a brute—a mere “chattel” in the eye of the law—placed beyond the circle of human brotherhood—cut off from his kind—his name, which the “recording angel” may have enrolled in heaven, among the blest, is impiously inserted in a *master’s leger*, with horses, sheep and swine. In law, the slave has no wife, no children, no country, and no home. He can own nothing, possess nothing, acquire nothing, but what must belong to another. To eat the fruit of his own toil, to clothe his person with the work of his own hands, is considered stealing. He toils that another may reap the fruit; he is industrious that another may live in idleness; he eats unbolted meal, that another may eat the bread of fine flour; he labors in chains at home, under a burning sun and biting lash, that another may ride in ease and splendor abroad; he lives in ignorance, that another may be educated; he is abused, that another may be exalted; he rests his toil-worn limbs on the cold, damp ground, that another may repose on the softest pillow; he is clad in coarse and tattered raiment, that another may be arrayed in purple and fine linen; he is sheltered only by the wretched hovel, that a master may dwell in a magnificent mansion; and to this condition he is bound down as by an arm of iron.

From this monstrous relation, there springs an unceasing stream of most revolting cruelties. The very accompaniments of the slave system, stamp it as the offspring of hell itself. To ensure good behavior, the slaveholder relies on *the whip*; to induce proper humility, he relies on *the whip*; to rebuke what he is pleased to term insolence, he relies on *the whip*; to supply the place of wages, as an incentive to toil, he relies on *the whip*; to bind down the spirit of the slave, to imbrute and destroy his manhood, he relies on *the whip*, the chain, the gag, the thumb-screw, the pillory, the bowie-knife, the pistol, and the blood-hound. These are the necessary and unvarying accompaniments of the system. Wherever slavery is found, these horrid instruments are also found.—Whether on the coast of Africa, among the savage tribes, or in South Carolina, among the refined and civilized, slavery is the same, and its accompaniments one and the same. It makes no difference whether the slaveholder worships the God of the Christians or is a follower of Mahomet, he is the minister of the same cruelty, and the author of the same misery. *Slavery* is always *slavery*; always the same foul, haggard, and damning scourge, whether found in the Eastern or in the Western Hemisphere.

There is a still deeper shade to be given to this picture. The physical cruelties are indeed sufficiently harassing and revolting; but they are as a few grains of sand on the sea shore, or a few drops of water in the great ocean, compared with the stupendous wrongs which it inflicts upon the mental, moral and religious nature of its hapless victims. It is only when we contemplate the slave as a moral and intellectual being, that we can adequately comprehend the unparalleled enormity of slavery, and

the intense criminality of the slaveholder. I have said that the slave was a man. "What a piece of work is man? How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! In form and moving, how express and admirable! In action, how like an angel! In apprehension how like a God! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!"

The slave is a man, "the image of God," but "a little lower than the angels;" possessing a soul, eternal and indestructible; capable of endless happiness, or immeasurable woe; a creature of hopes and fears, of affections and passions, of joys and sorrows; and he is endowed with those mysterious powers by which man soars above the things of time and sense, and grasps with undying tenacity, the elevating and sublimely glorious idea of a God. It is *such* a being that is smitten and blasted. The first work of slavery is to mar and deface those characteristics of its victims which distinguish *men* from *things*, and *persons* from *property*. Its first aim is to destroy all sense of high moral and religious responsibility. It reduces man to a mere machine. It cuts him off from his maker, it hides from him the laws of God, and leaves him to grope his way from time to eternity in the dark, under the arbitrary and despotic control of a frail, depraved and sinful fellow-man.

As the serpent-charmer of India is compelled to extract the deadly teeth of his venomous prey before he is able to handle him with impunity, so the slaveholder must strike down the conscience of the slave, before he can obtain the entire mastery over his victim.

It is, then, the first business of the enslaver of men to blunt, deaden and destroy the central principle of human responsibility. Conscience is to the individual soul and

to society, what the law of gravitation is to the universe. It holds society together, it is the basis of all trust and confidence; it is the pillar of all moral rectitude. Without it, suspicion would take the place of trust; vice would be more than a match for virtue; men would prey upon each other, like the wild beasts of the desert; and earth would become a *hell*.

Nor is slavery more adverse to the conscience than it is to the mind.

This is shown by the fact that in every State of the American Union, where slavery exists, except the State of Kentucky, there are laws, *absolutely* prohibitory of education among the slaves. The crime of teaching a slave to read is punishable with severe fines and imprisonment, and, in some instances, with *death itself*.

Nor are the laws respecting this matter, a dead letter. Cases may occur in which they are disregarded, and a few instances may be found where slaves may have learned to read; but such are isolated cases, and only prove the rule. The great mass of slaveholders look upon education among the slaves as utterly subversive of the slave system. I *well* remember when my mistress first announced to my master that she had discovered that I could read. His face colored at once, with surprise and chagrin. He said that "I was ruined, and my value as a slave destroyed; that a slave should know nothing but to obey his master; that to give a negro an inch would lead him to take an ell; that having learned how to read, I would soon want to know how to write; and that, by and by, I would be running away." I think my audience will bear witness to the correctness of this philosophy, and to the literal fulfilment of this prophecy.

It is perfectly well understood at the South that to educate a slave is to make him discontented with slavery, and to invest him with a power which shall open to him the treasures of freedom; and since the object of the slaveholder is to maintain complete authority over his slave, his constant vigilance is exercised to prevent everything which militates against, or endangers the stability of his authority. Education being among the menacing influences, and, perhaps, the most dangerous, is, therefore, the most cautiously guarded against.

It is true that we do not often hear of the enforcement of the law, punishing as a crime the teaching of slaves to read, but this is not because of a want of disposition to enforce it. The true reason, or explanation of the matter is this, there is the greatest unanimity of opinion among the white population in the South, in favor of the policy of keeping the slave in ignorance. There is, perhaps, another reason why the law against education is so seldom violated. The slave is *too* poor to be able to offer a temptation sufficiently strong to induce a white man to violate it; and it is not to be supposed that in a community where the moral and religious sentiment is in favor of slavery, many martyrs will be found sacrificing their liberty and lives by violating those prohibitory enactments.

As a general rule, then, darkness reigns over the abodes of the enslaved and "how great is that darkness!"

We are sometimes told of the contentment of the slaves, and are entertained with vivid pictures of their happiness. We are told that they often dance and sing; that their masters frequently give them wherewith to make merry; in fine, that they have little of which to complain. I admit that the slave *does* sometimes sing, dance, and appear to be merry. But what does this prove? It only proves

to my mind, that though slavery is armed with a thousand stings, it is not able entirely to kill the elastic spirit of the bondman. That spirit will rise and walk abroad, despite of whips and chains, and extract from the cup of nature, occasional drops of joy and gladness. No thanks to the slaveholder, nor to slavery, that the vivacious captive may sometimes dance in his chains, his very mirth in such circumstances, stands before God, as an accusing angel against his enslaver.

But *who* tells us of the extraordinary contentment and happiness of the slave? What traveller has explored the balmy regions of our Southern country and brought back "these glad tidings of joy?" Bring him on the platform, and bid him answer a few plain questions. We shall then be able to determine the weight and importance that attach to his testimony. Is he a minister? Yes. Were you ever in a slave State, sir? Yes. May I inquire the object of your mission South? To preach the gospel, sir. Of what denomination are you? A Presbyterian, sir. To whom were you introduced? To the Rev. Dr. Plummer. Is he a slaveholder, sir? Yes, sir. Has slaves about his house? Yes, sir. Were you then the guest of Dr. Plummer? Yes, sir. Waited on by slaves while there? Yes, sir. Did you preach for Dr. Plummer? Yes, sir. Did you spend your nights at the great house, or at the quarter among the slaves? At the great house. You had, then, no social intercourse with the slaves? No, sir. You fraternized, then, wholly with the *white* portion of the population while there? Yes, sir. This is sufficient, sir; you can leave the platform.

Nothing is more natural than that those who go into slave States, and enjoy the hospitality of slaveholders, should bring back favorable reports of the condition of

the slave. If that ultra republican, the Hon. Lewis Cass, could not return from the Court of France, without paying a compliment to royalty simply, because King Louis Phillippe patted him on the shoulder, called him "friend," and invited him to dinner, it is not to be expected that those hungry shadows of men in the shape of ministers, that go South, can escape a contamination even more beguiling and insidious. Alas! for the weakness of poor human nature! "Pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw!"

Why is it that all the reports of contentment and happiness among the slaves at the South come to us upon the authority of slave-holders, or (what is equally significant) of slave-holders' friends? *Why* is it that we do not hear from the slaves direct? The answer to this question furnishes the darkest features in the American slave system.

It is often said, by the opponents of the Anti-Slavery cause, that the condition of the people of Ireland is more deplorable than that of the American slaves. *Hur* be it from me to underrate the sufferings of the Irish people. They have been long oppressed; and the same heart that prompts me to plead the cause of the American bondman, makes it impossible for me *not* to sympathize with the oppressed of all lands. Yet I must say that there is no analogy between the two cases. The Irishman is poor, but he is *not* a slave. He *may* be in rags, but he is *not* a slave. He is still the master of his own body, and can say with the poet, "The hand of Douglass is his own."—"The world is all before him, where to choose;" and poor as may be my opinion of the British Parliament, I cannot believe that it will ever sink to such a depth of infamy as to pass a law for the recapture of Fugitive Irishmen! The shame and scandal of kidnapping will long remain

wholly monopolized by the American Congress! The Irishman has not only the liberty to emigrate from his country, but he has liberty at home. He can write, and speak, and co-operate for the attainment of his rights and the redress of his wrongs.

The multitude can assemble upon all the green hills and fertile plains of the Emerald Isle—they can pour out their grievances, and proclaim their wants without molestation; and the press, that “swift-winged messenger,” can bear the tidings of their doings to the extreme bounds of the civilized world. They have their “Conciliation Hall” on the banks of the Liffy, their reform Clubs, and their newspapers; they pass resolutions, send forth addresses, and enjoy the right of petition. But how is it with the American slave? *Where* may he assemble? *Where* is his Conciliation Hall? *Where* are his newspapers? *Where* is his right of petition? *Where* is his freedom of speech? his liberty of the press? and his right of locomotion? He is said to be happy; happy men can speak. But ask the slave—*what* is his condition?—*what* his state of mind?—*what* he thinks of his enslavement? and you had as well address your inquiries to the *silent dead*. There comes no *voice* from the enslaved. We are left to gather his feelings by imagining what *our’s* would be, were our souls in his soul’s stead.

If there were no other fact descriptive of slavery, than that the slave is dumb, this alone would be sufficient to mark the slave system as a grand aggregation of human horrors.

Most who are present will have observed that leading men, in this country, have been putting forth their skill to secure quiet to the nation. A system of measures to

promote this object was adopted a few months ago in Congress.

The result of those measures is known. Instead of quiet, they have produced alarm ; instead of peace, they have brought us war; and so it must ever be.

While this nation is guilty of the enslavement of three millions of innocent men and women, it is as idle to think of having a sound and lasting peace, as it is to think there is no God, to take cognizance of the affairs of men.— There can be no peace to the wicked while slavery continues in the land. It will be condemned; and while it is condemned there will be agitation ; Nature must cease to be nature ; Men must become monsters ; Humanity must be transformed ; Christianity must be exterminated ; all ideas of justice, and the laws of eternal goodness, must be utterly blotted out from the human soul, ere a system so foul and infernal can escape condemnation, or this guilty Republic can have a sound and enduring Peace.

## LECTURE NO. 2.

*Delivered on Sunday Evening, December 8, 1850.*

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IN my lecture of Sunday evening last, I strove to impress those who kindly gave me their attention, with a slight idea of the all-controlling power of American slavery in the affairs of this nation.

I briefly unfolded the nature of the relation between master and slave ; the cruel, arbitrary and despotic authority of the slaveholder ; and I portrayed the deplorable ignorance and the deep debasement of the enslaved.

This evening, I shall aim to expose further the wickedness of the slave system—to show that its evils are not confined to the Southern States ; but that they overshadow the whole country ; and that every American citizen is responsible for its existence, and is solemnly required, by the highest convictions of duty and safety, to labor for its utter extirpation from the land.

By some who hear me, these propositions will be, perhaps, regarded as far too tame for the basis of a lecture on slavery at this exciting period. They have studied the subject and understand it. But I would beg such persons to remember that they are the few, not the many ; and that, being the exception, they afford no criterion for the course I ought to pursue on the present occasion. By them, the anti-slavery alphabet was learned perhaps twenty years ago ; but the great mass of the American people, I am sorry to say, have that simple lesson yet to

learn. I design, therefore, to speak to opponents, rather than to friends ; and although I may not be able to entertain the latter by the utterance of new truths, I may afford them the satisfaction of hearing those truths enforced which they have so long cherished.

Indeed, I ought to state, what must be obvious to all, that, properly speaking, there is no such thing as *new* truth ; for truth, like the God whose attribute it is, is eternal. In this sense, there is, indeed, nothing new under the sun. Error may be properly designated as *old* or *new*, since it is but a misconception, or an incorrect view of the truth. Misapprehensions of what truth is, have their beginnings and their endings. They pass away as the race move onward. But truth is “from everlasting to everlasting,” and can never pass away.

Such is the truth of man’s right to liberty. It existed in the very idea of man’s creation. It was *his* even before he comprehended it. He was created in it, endowed with it, and it can never be taken from him. No laws, no statutes, no compacts, no covenants, no compromises, no constitutions, can abrogate or destroy it. It is beyond the reach of the strongest earthly arm, and smiles at the ravings of tyrants from its hiding place in the bosom of God. Men may hinder its exercise—they may act in disregard of it—they are even permitted to war against it ; but they fight against heaven, and their career must be short, for Eternal Providence will speedily vindicate the right.

The existence of this right is self-evident. It is written upon all the powers and faculties of man. The desire for it is the deepest and strongest of all the powers of the human soul. Earth, sea and air—great nature, with her thousand voices, proclaims it.

In the language of Addison, we may apostrophize it :

“Oh Liberty! thou Goddess, heavenly bright,  
 Profuse of bliss, and pregnant with delight!  
 Thou mak'st the glowing face of nature gay,  
 Giv'st beauty to the sun, and pleasure to the day.”

I have said that the right to liberty is self-evident.—No argument, no researches into mouldy records, no learned disquisitions, are necessary to establish it. To assert it, is to call forth a sympathetic response from every human heart, and to send a thrill of joy and gladness round the world. Tyrants, oppressors and slaveholders are stunned by its utterance ; while the oppressed and enslaved of all lands hail it as an angel of deliverance. Its assertion in Russia, in Austria, in Egypt, in fifteen States of the American Union, is a crime. In the harems of Turkey, and on the Southern plantations of Carolina, it is alike prohibited ; for the guilty oppressors of every clime understand its *truth*, and appreciate its electric power.

*Slavery is a sin*, in that it comprehends a monstrous violation of the great principle of human liberty, to which I have endeavored thus to draw your attention.—In this respect, it is a direct war upon the government of God. In subjecting one man to the arbitrary control of another, it contravenes the first command of the decalogue ; and as upon that command rests the whole superstructure of justice, purity and brotherly kindness, slavery may be justly regarded as a warfare against all the principles of infinite goodness.

It is not, however, merely with slavery as a system that I propose to deal. It has been well characterized by the faithful John Wesley as “*the sum of all villanies*,” and “*the concentration of all crime*.” I prefer to speak of

the villains in connection with the villany, and of the criminals in connection with the crimes. I like the pure and stern testimony of John Wesley. It expresses the sense of a true heart in respect to the foul abomination. Adam Clarke is no less emphatic. To the traffickers in the souls and bodies of men, this great commentator says, "Oh! ye most flagitious of knaves, and worst of hypocrites! cast off at once the mask of religion, and deepen not your endless perdition by professing the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, while you continue in this traffic!"

In contemplating the sin of slavery, and the guilt of slaveholders, I have marvelled at the coolness and self-complacency with which persons at the North often speak of having friends and relatives who are slaveholders at the South. They speak of the fact without a blush of shame, and even as though honor were conferred upon them by their slaveholding friends and relatives. What a commentary is this on the state of morals among us! Why, if the moral sentiment of the North were what it ought to be, a lady would as soon tell of an abandoned sister or a pirate brother, as boast of having slaveholding relatives; for there is nothing in piracy, nothing in lewdness, that is not to be found in the slave system—indeed, slavery is a system of lewdness and piracy. Every slaveholder is the legalized keeper of a house of ill-fame; no matter how high he may stand in church or in state.—He may be a Bishop Mead or a Henry Clay—a reputed saint or an open sinner—he is still the legalized head of a den of infamy.

As a nation, we profess profound respect for chastity and the marriage institution. A violation of either is looked upon (and very properly so) with feelings of ab-

solate horror. A maddened husband, or an outraged father, is almost justified by public opinion in taking the law into his own hand, and executing summary vengeance upon the guilty creature who, by studied arts, covers his family with shame. The laws of this commonwealth, like those of other Northern States, have thrown around innocence the most stringent protection. Our pulpits are keenly alive to the importance of the marriage institution, and the press is not a whit behind the pulpit. These things indicate, I say, a profound respect for moral purity. I will not controvert the genuineness of this seeming virtue of the community. But if it be genuine, the State of New York must be an emancipation State, and that speedily. I hold myself ready to prove that more than a million of women, in the Southern States of this Union, are, by the laws of the land, and through no fault of their own, consigned to a life of revolting prostitution ; that, by those laws, in many of the States, if a woman, in defence of her own innocence, shall lift her hand against the brutal aggressor, she may be lawfully put to death. I hold myself ready to prove, by the laws of slave states, that three millions of the people of those States are utterly incapacitated to form marriage contracts. I am also prepared to prove that slave breeding is relied upon by Virginia as one of her chief sources of wealth. It has long been known that the best blood of old Virginia may now be found in the slave markets of New Orleans. It is also known that slave women, who are nearly white, are sold in those markets, at prices which proclaim, trumpet-tongued, the accursed purposes to which they are to be devoted. Youth and elegance, beauty and innocence, are exposed for sale upon the auction block ; while villainous monsters stand

around, with pockets lined with gold, gazing with lustful eyes upon their prospective victims. But I will not go behind the scene further. I leave you to picture to yourselves what must be the state of society where marriage is not allowed by the law, and where *woman* is reduced to a mere *chattle*. To the thoughtful I need say no more. You have already conceived a state of things equalling, in horror and abomination, your worst conceptions of Sodom itself.

Every slaveholder is a party, a guilty party, to this awful wickedness. He owns the house, and is master of the victims. He is therefore responsible. I say again, no matter how high the slaveholder may stand in popular estimation—he may be a minister of religion, or an Hon. member of Congress ; but so long as he is a slaveholder, he deserves to be held up before the world as the patron of lewdness, and the foe of virtue. He may not be personally implicated in the wickedness ; he may scrupulously maintain and respect the marriage institution for himself and for his family, for all this can be done selfishly ; but while he robs any portion of the human family of the right of marriage, and takes from innocent woman the protection of the law, no matter what his individual respectability may be, he is to be classed with the vilest of the vile, and with the basest of the base. To boast of relationship, or friendly association with these infamous men—to fellowship with such men as good Christians, is a sad commentary on the morals and the religion of those who do it. It implies that their professions of purity are conventional and artificial ; that there is no real soundness in them ; that their virtue is seeming, rather than real ; that their reverence for the marriage institution is the merest affectation, and has no

higher nor stronger support than that afforded by public opinion ; and that their horror at its violation depends wholly upon the complexion of the parties involved, and not upon the sin committed.

I have now spoken plainly, but not more so than the nature of the case requires. If any have been shocked at my plainness of speech, I beg them to remember that *true* delicacy does not consist in a squeamish ear. In the language of the eloquent Fox, I would remind them "that true humanity does not consist in shrinking and starting at such recitals, but in a disposition of the heart to remedy the evils they unfold. True virtue belongs rather to the mind than to the nerves, and should prompt men to charitable exertion in correcting abuses. To shudder at enormities, and do nothing to remove them, is little better than to stamp ourselves with the most pitiful and contemptible hypocrisy." To quote another author, I would say,

"TRUE modesty is a distinguished grace,  
And only blushes in the proper place ;  
But counterfeit is base, and skulks, through fear,  
Where 'tis a shame to be ashamed t' appear."

I pass now to the consideration of another feature of slavery. I allude to its cruelty. Much is said among us, both by the press and the pulpit, of the kindness of slaveholders to their slaves, and of their natural attachment. The relation of master and slave has been called patriarchal, and only second in benignity and tenderness to that of the parent and child. This representation is doubtless believed by many Northern people ; and this may account, in part, for the lack of interest which we find among persons whom we are bound to believe to be honest and humane. *What*, then, are the facts ! Here I will not quote my own experience in sla-

very ; for this you might call one sided testimony. I will not cite the declarations of abolitionists ; for these you might pronounce exaggerations. I will not rely upon advertisements cut from newspapers ; for these you might call isolated cases. But I will refer you to the laws adopted by the legislatures of the slave States. I give you such evidence, because it cannot be invalidated nor denied. I hold in my hand sundry extracts from the slave codes of our country, from which I will quote. \* \* \*

Now, if the foregoing be an indication of kindness, *what is cruelty?* If this be parental affection, *what is bitter malignity?* A more atrocious and blood-thirsty string of laws could not well be conceived of ! And yet I am bound to say that they fall short of indicating the horrible cruelties constantly practised in the slave States.

I admit that there are individual slaveholders less cruel and barbarous than is allowed by law ; but these form the exception. The majority of slaveholders find it necessary, to insure obedience, at times, to avail themselves of the utmost extent of the law, and many go beyond it. If kindness were the rule, we should not see advertisements filling the columns of almost every Southern newspaper, offering large rewards for fugitive slaves, and describing them as being branded with irons, loaded with chains, and scarred by the whip. One of the most telling testimonies against the pretended kindness of slaveholders, is the fact that uncounted numbers of fugitives are now inhabiting the Dismal Swamp, preferring the untamed wilderness to their cultivated homes—choosing rather to encounter hunger and thirst, and to roam with the wild beasts of the forest, running the hazard of being hunted and shot down, than to submit to the authority of *kind* masters.

I tell you, my friends, humanity is never driven to such an unnatural course of life, without great wrong.—The slave finds more of the milk of human kindness in the bosom of the savage Indian, than in the heart of his *Christian* master. He leaves the man of the *Bible*, and takes refuge with the man of the *tomahawk*. He rushes from the praying slaveholder into the paws of the bear. He quits the homes of men for the haunts of wolves.—He prefers to encounter a life of trial, however bitter, or death, however terrible, to dragging out his existence under the dominion of these *kind* masters.

The apologists for slavery often speak of the abuses of slavery; and they tell us that they are as much opposed to those abuses as we are; and that they would go as far to correct those abuses and to meliorate the condition of the slave as any body. The answer to that view is, that slavery is *itself* an abuse; that it lives by abuse; and dies by the absence of abuse. Grant that slavery is right; grant that the relation of master and slave may innocently exist; and there is not a single outrage which was ever committed against the slave but what finds an apology in the very necessity of the case. As was said by a slaveholder, (the Rev. A. G. Few,) to the Methodist Conference, "If the relation be right, the means to maintain it are also right;" for without those means, slavery could not exist. Remove the dreadful scourge—the plaited thong—the galling fetter—the accursed chain—and let the slaveholder rely solely upon moral and religious power, by which to secure obedience to his orders, and *how* long do you suppose a slave would remain on his plantation? The case only needs to be stated; it carries its own refutation with it.

Absolute and arbitrary power can never be maintained

by one man, over the body and soul of another man, without brutal chastisement and enormous cruelty.

To talk of *kindness* entering into a relation in which one party is robbed of wife, of children, of his hard earnings, of home, of friends, of society, of knowledge, and of all that makes this life desirable, is most absurd, wicked and preposterous.

I could dwell longer on this aspect of my present subject. It is fruitful, and affords abundant material for extended remark, but I leave it for the consideration of other topics announced for this evening's lecture.

I have shown that slavery is *wicked—wicked*, in that it violates the great law of liberty, written on every human heart—*wicked*, in that it violates the first command of the decalogue—*wicked*, in that it fosters the most disgusting licentiousness—*wicked*, in that it mars and defaces the image of God by cruel and barbarous inflictions—*wicked*, in that it contravenes the laws of eternal justice, and tramples in the dust all the humane and heavenly precepts of the New Testament.

The evils resulting from this huge system of iniquity are not confined to the States south of Mason and Dixon's line. Its noxious influence can easily be traced throughout our Northern borders. It comes even as far North as the State of New York. Traces of it may be seen even in Rochester; and travellers have told me it casts its gloomy shadows across the lake, approaching the very shores of Queen Victoria's dominions.

The presence of slavery may be explained by (as it is the explanation of) the mobocratic violence, which lately disgraced New York, and which still more recently disgraced the city of Boston. These violent demonstrations, these outrageous invasions of human rights, faintly

indicate the presence and power of slavery here. It is a significant fact, that while meetings for almost any purpose under heaven may be held unmolested in the city of Boston, that in the same city, a meeting cannot be peaceably held for the purpose of preaching the doctrine of the American Declaration of Independence, "that all men are created equal." The pestiferous breath of slavery taints the whole moral atmosphere of the North, and enervates the moral energies of the whole people.

The moment a foreigner ventures upon our soil, and utters a natural repugnance to oppression, that moment he is made to feel that there is little sympathy in this land for him. If he were greeted with smiles before, he meets with frowns now; and it shall go well with him if he be not subjected to that peculiarly fitting method of showing fealty to slavery, the assaults of a mob.

Now, will any man tell me that such a state of things is natural, and that such conduct, on the part of the people of the North, springs from a consciousness of rectitude? No. Every fibre of the human heart unites in detestation of tyranny, and it is only when the human mind has become familiarized with slavery, is accustomed to its injustice, and corrupted by its selfishness, that it fails to record its abhorrence of slavery, and does not exult in the triumphs of liberty.

The northern people have been long connected with slavery; they have been linked to a decaying corpse, which has destroyed the moral health. The union of the government; the union of the north and south, in the political parties; the union, in the religious organizations of the land, have all served to deaden the moral sense of the northern people, and to impregnate them with sentiments and ideas for ever in conflict with what as a nation, we

call *genius of American institutions*. Rightly viewed, this is an alarming fact, and ought to rally all that is pure, just, and holy in one determined effort, to crush the monster of corruption, and to scatter "its guilty profits" to the winds. In a high moral sense, as well as in a national sense, the whole American people are responsible for slavery, and must share, in its guilt and shame, with the most obdurate men-stealers of the South.

While slavery exists, and the union of these States endures, every American citizen must bear the chagrin of hearing his country branded before the world, as a nation of liars and hypocrites; and behold his cherished national flag pointed at with the utmost scorn and derision. Even now, an American *abroad* is pointed out in the crowd, as coming from a land where men gain their fortunes by "the blood of souls," from a land of slave-markets, of blood-hounds, and slave-hunters; and, in some circles such a man is shunned altogether, as a moral pest. Is it not time then for every American to awake, and inquire into his duty with respect to this subject.

Wendell Phillips, (the eloquent New England orator,) on his return from Europe, in 1842, said, "As I stood upon the shores of Genoa, and saw, floating on the placid waters of the Mediterranean, the beautiful American war ship Ohio, with her masts tapering proportionately aloft, and an Eastern sun reflecting her noble form upon the sparkling waters, attracting the gaze of the multitude, my first impulse was of pride, to think myself an American; but when I thought that the first time that gallant ship would gird on her gorgeous apparel, and wake from beneath her sides her dormant thunders, it would be in defence of the African slave-trade, I blushed, *in utter shame*, for my country."

Let me say again, *slavery is alike the sin and the shame of the American people*; it is a blot upon the American name, and the only national reproach which need make an American hang his head in shame, in the presence of monarchical governments.

With this gigantic evil in the land, we are constantly told to look *at home*; if we say ought against crowned heads, we are pointed to our enslaved millions; if we talk of sending missionaries and bibles abroad, we are pointed to three millions, now lying in worse than heathen darkness; if we express a word of sympathy for Kossuth and his Hungarian fugitive brethren, we are pointed to that horrible and hell-black enactment "the FUGITIVE SLAVE BILL."

Slavery blunts the edge of all our rebukes of tyranny abroad—the criticisms that we make upon other nations, only call forth ridicule, contempt and scorn. In a word, we are made a reproach, and a by-word to a mocking earth, and we must continue to be so made, so long as slavery continues to pollute our soil.

We have heard much of late of the virtue of patriotism, the love of country, &c., and this sentiment, so natural and so strong, has been impiously appealed to, by all the powers of human selfishness, to cherish the viper which is stinging our national life away. In its name we have been called upon to deepen our infamy before the world, to rivet the fetter more firmly on the limbs of the enslaved, and to become utterly insensible to the voice of human woe that is wafted to us on every Southern gale. We have been called upon, in its name, to desecrate our whole land by the footprints of slave-hunters, and, even to engage ourselves in the horrible business of kidnapping.

I, too, would invoke the spirit of patriotism ; *not* in a narrow and restricted sense, but I trust, with a broad and manly signification ; *not* to cover up our national sins, but to inspire us with sincere repentance ; *not* to hide our shame from the world's gaze, but utterly to abolish the cause of that shame ; *not* to explain away our gross inconsistencies as a nation, but to remove the hateful, jarring and incongruous elements from the land ; *not* to sustain an egregious wrong, but to unite all our energies in the grand effort to remedy that wrong.

I would invoke the spirit of patriotism, in the name of the law of the living God, natural and revealed ; and in the full belief that "righteousness exalteth a nation, while sin is a reproach to any people." "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly ; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from the holding of bribes, he shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks, bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure."

We have not only heard much lately of patriotism, and of its aid being invoked on the side of slavery and injustice, but, the very prosperity of this people has been called in to deafen them to the voice of duty, and to lead them onward in the pathway of sin. Thus has the blessing of God been converted into a curse. In the spirit of genuine patriotism, I warn the American people, by all that is just and honorable, to BEWARE !

I warn them that strong, proud and prosperous though we be, there is a power above us that can "bring down high looks ; at the breath of whose mouth our wealth may take wings ; and before whom every knee shall bow ;" and who can tell how soon the avenging angel may pass over our land, and the sable bondman now in

chains, may become the instruments of our nation's chastisement ! Without appealing to any higher feeling, I would warn the American people, and the American government, to *be wise* in their day and generation. I exhort them to remember the history of other nations ; and I remind them that America cannot always sit "as a queen," in peace and repose ; that prouder and stronger governments than this have been shattered by the bolts of a just God ; that the time *may* come when those they now despise and hate, may be needed ; when those whom they now compel, by oppression, to be enemies, may be wanted as friends ; what *has* been, *may* be again. There is a point beyond which human endurance cannot go. The crushed worm may yet turn under the heel of the oppressor. I warn them, then, with all solemnity, and in the name of retributive justice, to *look to their ways* ; for in an evil hour, those sable arms that have, for the last two centuries, been engaged in cultivating and adorning the fair fields of our country, may yet become the instruments of terror, desolation, and death, throughout our borders. We are told, by the President of the United States, in his recent message to Congress, that the American people are at peace with all the world ; and this may be true in the sense in which it is used ; but *what* if this may not always be the case ? *What* if, by some strange vicissitude, amicable relations with Europe should be interrupted. What if *war* should take the place of diplomacy ? and some principle of international law between this and some strong European power should be defeated on the battle-field ? *Where*, then, would be our safety ? We are told, (by a Southern Statesman,) that *a million* of slaves are ready to "strike for freedom," at the first roll of a foreign drum ; and I would ask, in

his language, "How are you to sustain an assault from England or France, with this cancer in your vitals?" The slaves in our land have reached a number *not* to be despised. They are *three* millions—a fearful multitude to be in chains. The American people numbered *three* millions when they asserted their independence; and although they contended with the strongest power on the globe, they were successful.

It was the sage of the Old Dominion that said, (while speaking of the possibility of a conflict between the slaves and the slaveholders,) "God has no attribute that could take sides with the oppressor in such a contest. I tremble for my country when I reflect that *God* is *just*, and that his justice cannot sleep for ever." Such is the warning voice of Thomas Jefferson; and every day's experience since its utterance until now, confirms its wisdom, and commends its truth.